



# Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

## Public Utility Commission

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May 3, 2006

OREGON PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION  
ATTENTION: FILING CENTER  
PO BOX 2148  
SALEM OR 97308-2148

RE: **OPUC Docket No. AR 507** - In the Matter of a Rulemaking Regarding Connection of Energy Utility Service.

Enclosed for filing in the above-captioned docket is the Public Utility Commission Staff's AR 507 Final Comments. As a courtesy, the interested persons identified on the Commission's service list were also provided an electronic copy of these documents.

*/s/ Diane Davis*

Diane Davis  
Regulatory Operations Division  
Filing on Behalf of Public Utility Commission Staff  
(503) 378-4372

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION  
OF OREGON**

AR 507

In the Matter of a Rulemaking Regarding )  
Connection of Energy Utility Service )

**OREGON PUC  
STAFF'S FINAL COMMENTS**

Staff response to Northwest Natural (NWN) comments

At the hearing, NWN singled out as its primary issue a concern that an at-fault designation for a rule violation would apply to a customer complaint arising from a reconnection or connection that is made after the deadline prescribed by the proposed rules, if the cause of the delay was due to “unexpected delays in the service technician’s daily schedule.” NWN testified that “stuff happens” and referred to its written comments for examples of “unavoidable everyday occurrences” that would cause such a delay.

Staff believes the proposed rules represent a reasonable compromise of the participants’ original positions. Based on filed written comments, or the absence of opposition, the other five energy utilities and the Citizen’s Utility Board appear to agree with Staff’s position.

Staff believes that NWN’s testimony serves to strengthen Staff’s position in that the very nature of outside service work is such that an employee’s schedule must retain sufficient flexibility to accommodate the timely completion of any of the work that is required in a utility’s day-to-day operations, including compliance with the proposed rules. Such flexibility is dependent on having sufficient staffing levels to allow room in the employees’ schedules for “unavoidable everyday occurrences.” (Emphasis added.)

In the near past, NWN’s practice was to complete a reconnection or connection of service the same day as it received a request. Under the proposed rules, nothing would prevent NWN from adopting such a standard or any other standard it chooses, as long as such a standard allowed compliance with the rules. NWN further suggested that the proposed rules would not allow technicians to work past 5:00 p.m. (According to NWN’s testimony, its technicians currently may work until 10:00 p.m.) to complete a daily schedule. Staff disagrees. Under the proposed rules, the utility has the flexibility to determine how it will meet the deadlines imposed by the rules. NWN has had, and would continue to have, the choice to have service technicians work beyond 5:00 p.m. on any day it chooses. The proposed rules simply require that reconnections and connections of service must be completed according to established timeframes. For example, if a request for reconnection is received at 8:00 a.m. on a Tuesday, a utility has until Wednesday at 5:00 p.m. to complete the work. Of the 33 hours NWN would have to meet the deadline in this example, 23 of those hours would be considered standard

working hours, given the ability of NWN's service technicians to work until 10 p.m. As stated in Staff's testimony the proposed rule reflects the minimum level of service a customer should expect a utility to deliver.

Staff, NWN, and several of the utilities met after the hearing to discuss NWN's primary issue discussed above. Staff does not agree with the characterizations raised by NWN that Staff is unwilling to compromise, and simply may not understand the complex nature of NWN's outside operations. Staff has accrued, through many years of experience, a good working understanding of the day-to-day operations of the energy utilities regulated by the Commission. Through that experience, Staff has also found that it is most effective when a utility is required to meet a standard for customer service that includes (for noncompliance) a consequence that matters to the utility. Staff continues to uphold that the proposed rules, reflecting a compromise reached by the majority of the participants in this docket, offer the best balance between the rights and responsibilities of both the utilities and their customers.

#### Staff Response to Pacific Power and Light Comments

To recap its filed written comments, Staff believes that it is good public policy to ensure that customers who schedule a same day "After Hours Reconnect" pay costs appropriate to that level of service.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

AR 507

I certify that I have, this day, served Final Comments of Oregon PUC Staff, May 3, 2006, upon all participants of record in this proceeding by electronic mail as indicated on the service list below.

Dated at Salem, Oregon, this 3rd day of May, 2006.

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Diane Davis  
On behalf of the Staff of the  
Public Utility Commission of Oregon

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